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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3800  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0442  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000114

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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2020  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [NL](#)  
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: A REDUCED ROLE LIKELY BUT  
DETAILS WILL NOT COME QUICKLY

REF: A. THE HAGUE 109

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[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 108

[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 097

[1](#)D. 09 THE HAGUE 759

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Edwin R. Nolan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The most immediate result of the February 20 collapse of the Dutch government (reftel B) is the absence of a cabinet decision on post-2010 commitments to ISAF/Afghanistan. In that absence, the default position, withdrawal of Task Force Uruzgan by December 2010, stands. It will likely be mid-March before the scope of authority of the interim "caretaker" government is known. At best, it will have limited decision-making capability on existing mandates regarding Afghanistan. This will compel Dutch forces to redeploy from Uruzgan beginning in August 2010. While there may be political support for some commitment in Afghanistan, there is no possibility of an extension as lead nation of Task Force Uruzgan. The earliest possible designation of a follow-on lead of Task Force Uruzgan will provide the Dutch a partner for developing realistic joint

capabilities. Post recommends giving the Dutch time and political space to develop consensus on their way ahead in Afghanistan. We will look for opportunities over the coming weeks to discreetly express our hopes for continued meaningful Dutch military involvement in Afghanistan. However, we need to remain cognizant of the fact that, although the caretaker government favors an Uruzgan extension, it is a minority government with highly limited authority. We must be highly circumspect in becoming involved in what could be an emotional election issue in the coming months leading up to the June 9 parliamentary election. END SUMMARY.

TOO SOON TO CALL "NO DECISION"

12. (S/NF) It is too soon to assume there will be a government decision on Afghanistan, in part or in total, that will result in a continued significant Dutch commitment. There has been Christian Democrat (CDA)/PM Balkenende political support for a commitment to Afghanistan, with the only questions being types of missions, locations, and what, if any, troop levels. There is no/no majority support for a continuation of the mission in Uruzgan, and public opinion is decidedly negative. On February 23, the Queen accepted the resignation of all Labor Party ministers and asked the Prime Minister to closely consult with parliament on whether there is support for subjects that cannot bear delay.<sup>8</sup> Once these consultations are complete, we will have more clarity on what types of decisions the caretaker government will be able to make. National parliamentary elections are scheduled for June 9. The formation of a new coalition government likely will take between two and nine months thereafter. The Dutch cabinet and parliament likely will prefer to put off some controversial decisions regarding ISAF/Afghanistan until after the new coalition government is formed. However, decisions on Afghanistan will influence what coalition can be formed, as the coalition platform must be pre-agreed. Any continued Dutch military mission in Uruzgan is virtually certain to be among those issues deferred, according to Karl van Oosterom, Senior Advisor to the PM. Meanwhile, other Qvan Oosterom, Senior Advisor to the PM. Meanwhile, other Afghanistan issues might be included in the list of subjects that the Prime Minister and parliament agree & cannot bear delay<sup>8</sup> and need to be decided earlier by the caretaker government. In that case, the caretaker government will need to secure an ad hoc majority in parliament on each issue.

#### PARAMETERS OF EXPECTED COMMITMENTS

13. (S/NF) Regardless of the fact that no decision has been taken, the realities of the Dutch political landscape, coupled with the limitations of the Dutch military, provides a narrow range of possibilities regarding a future commitment. The Dutch can be expected to provide training through Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT), Police Mentoring Teams (PMT), F-16 aircraft, intelligence elements, headquarters staff elements, and development funding. The commitment of assets to Uruzgan province, re-deployment of THE HAGUE 00000114 002 OF 002 the Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) to another province, or a significant commitment of troops (400 to 700) to another mission will be the focus of the post-2010 decision. Although there has been support from opposition parties to keep the PRT in Uruzgan with enablers and force protection, there has not been support to extend as lead nation of the Task Force, nor to extend a commitment for a battle group. And, during the pre-election campaign period, previous expressions of support could be modified or limited. At best, there is a possibility, albeit slim, the Dutch will keep their PRT in Uruzgan with a significant force protection element of approximately 500 troops. Karel van Oosterom, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, told the DCM February 20 that senior officials will be making "discreet contacts" with the USG and NATO on viable options that can demonstrate a strong Dutch commitment to ISAF/Afghanistan.

#### PRACTICALITIES OF CURRENT MANDATE

14. (C) The Dutch military will carry out their mission in accordance with the current mandate. Although there is some ambiguity, the mandate calls for the re-deployment of Task

Force Uruzgan beginning August 1, 2010, with completion by December 1. The Head of Team Uruzgan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told POLMILOFF February 23 that although the military has well-laid plans for re-deployment, the Chief of Defense (CHOD) has indicated he is well aware of the fluidity of the current situation and can adjust at any time to comply with a change in tasking.

COMMENT

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15. (S/NF) COMMENT: The state of play within the Dutch government will be unpredictable in the near term, with consultations between the caretaker government and parliament culminating in an agreed-upon scope of authority for the interim government. Post believes it best to wait for these initial decisions before speculating on future Dutch commitments to ISAF/Afghanistan and recommending specific courses of actions that may be irrelevant or unhelpful if taken too soon. Post emphasizes that it will be virtually impossible to solicit a Dutch commitment to extend their lead of Task Force Uruzgan beyond the current mandate. The earlier a Task Force Uruzgan lead nation successor is announced, the greater the likelihood of obtaining any substantial commitment by the Dutch to partner in Uruzgan. Nonetheless, we must caution against any optimism that a Dutch mission in Uruzgan can be expected. With a caretaker government in place consisting of only Christian Democrats (CDA) and Christian Union (CU) Ministers, official voices are likely to be telling us what we want to hear. If in fact the June elections enable a new center-right coalition to be formed under PM Balkenende, new opportunities may open. However, a Labor party victory with some type of center-left coalition minus Balkenende, or even a broad centrist coalition, is likely to allow only very modest Dutch contributions. Accordingly, we believe, it would be ill-advised for NATO planning to count on any Dutch military presence in Uruzgan beyond December 2010. (Note: The re-election of Balkenende as CDA party leader (in hope of a Qre-election of Balkenende as CDA party leader (in hope of a continuation of him as Prime Minister) has been viewed by some political observers as compromising the CDA's prospects in the upcoming Parliamentary election End Note)

16. (S/NF) For the immediate future, the Dutch should be given time and political space to develop a consensus on Afghanistan in this new environment. We should also refrain from commenting publicly, unless asked to do so by the Dutch themselves. The Dutch are intensely sensitive to perceptions of outside meddling, and we must be discreet but clear in approaching the interim government as well as relevant political parties that will likely play a role in the future government. We should be cautious that our approach does not provide fodder for more radical elements of the Dutch political scene, but we will actively engage across the political spectrum for continued meaningful Dutch involvement in Afghanistan. END COMMENT.

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